

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Na Dathan aig Bran

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 982. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 678 corresponds to Litir 982.

Dè an t-ainm a bh’ air a’ chù aig Fionn Mac Cumhail? Tha fios agaibh, nach eil? Bran. Ach seo ceist eile dhuibh. Dè an dath – no dathan – a bh’ air Bran? Bha casan buidhe aige agus bha e dubh air gach cliathaich. Bha a bhrù geal, bha a dhruim uaine agus bha a chluasan dearg.

Ach, bidh sibh a’ faighneachd, nach robh e dubh air fad nuair a bha e na chuilean? Bha. Ach dh’atharraich a dhathan nuair a bha e ann an dùthaich nan Lochlannach. Agus seo mar a thachair e.

Chaidh iarraidh air Fionn a dhol a Lochlann airson na daoine a shàbhaladh bho uilebheist locha. Thachair e ri nighean Rìgh Lochlainn a bha gu math brònach. ‘**Dè tha a’ cur ort?**’ dh’fhaighnich Fionn.

‘Tha an t-uilebheist a’ marbhadh duine gach latha,’ thuirt i. ‘Agus an-diugh, ’s e turas mo bhràthar.’

‘Cha tèid do bhràthair chun an locha an-diugh,’ arsa Fionn. ‘Thèid mise ann na àite.’ Chaidh Fionn chun an Rìgh agus dh’inns e dha gun toireadh e dùbhlán don uilebheist. Ach bhiodh e a’ dol ann às aonais Bhraon oir fhuair e a-mach, **le bhith a’ cur a chorraig fo a dheud-fios**, nan rachadh cù ann roimhe, nach maireadh an dithis aca beò. Cheangail e Bran le trì slabhraidhean gus nach fhaigheadh e air falbh.

Chaidh Fionn gu bruach an locha. Thàinig an t-uilebheist agus tharraing e Fionn a dh’ionnsaigh an uisge. Gu h-obann, dh’fhosgail an t-uilebheist a bheul agus ghabh e grèim air Fionn. Chunnaic Bran na bha a’ tachairt. Bhris e na slabhraidhean aige agus leum e a-steach a bheul an uilebheist dìreach an dèidh cas Fhinn.

Chaidh an t-uilebheist fodha. Thàinig e a dh’uachdar a-rithist agus shnàimh e aig astar air feadh an locha. Bha muinntir an àite cruinn còmhla air bruach an locha. Chunnaic iad Fionn agus Bran a’ tighinn a-mach tro chliathaich an uilebheist. Bha Fionn gun stiall air, agus bha Bran maol, gun ghaoisid.

Bha Fionn gu math lag, agus chuir mac Rìgh Lochlainn roimhe an gaisgeach a mharbhadh agus a ràdh ris na daoine gur e e fhèin a chuir às don uilebheist. Ach bha fios aig Fionn dè bha fa-near dha, oir bha air a chorrach a chur fo a dheud-fios.

‘Shàbhail mi do bheatha,’ thuirt Fionn ris a’ phrionnsa, ‘agus seo an duais a tha mi a’ faighinn.’ Bha am prionnsa air a nàrachadh.

Chaidh Fionn a thoirt gu caisteal an Rìgh far an d’ fhuair e aodach ùr. Bha dotairean ga chuideachadh, ach bha Fionn a’ gabhail cùram mu Bhraon a bha gun ghaoisid. ‘Tha mise ceart gu leòr,’ thuirt e, ‘ach cuiribh bian ceart air a’ chù.’

An ceann greis, thill na dotairean le cù bàn molach. ‘Obh obh,’ thuirt Fionn. ‘Chan e sin an dath a bha mi ag iarraidh idir.’

‘Dè tha sibh ag iarraidh, ma-thà?’ dh’fhaighnich na dotairean.

Agus seo na thuirt Fionn: ‘Casan buidhe aig Bran, dà thaobh dhubh agus tarr geal, druim uaine chon na seilge agus dà chluais chorrach chrò-dhearg.’ Thug na dotairean Bran air falbh agus nuair a thill iad leis, ’s ann mar sin a bha e. Agus bha e furasta aithneachadh!

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: dath: *colour*; às aonais: *without*; air a nàrachadh: *ashamed*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Bha casan buidhe aige agus bha e dubh air gach cliathaich: *he had yellow legs and he was black on each side*; nach robh e dubh air fad nuair a bha e na chuilean?: *wasn't he entirely black when he was a puppy?*; a dhol a Lochlann airson na daoine a shàbhaladh bho uilebheist locha: *to go to Lochlann to save the people from a lake monster*; ’s e turas mo bhràthar: *it's my brother's turn*; thèid mise ann na àite: *I'll go in his place*; dh’innis e dha gun toireadh e dùbhlán don uilebheist: *he told him he would challenge the monster*; nan rachadh cù ann roimhe, nach maireadh an dithis aca beò: *if a dog went there before him, that the two of them would not survive*; cheangail e Bran le trì slabhraidhean gus nach fhaigheadh e air falbh: *he tied Bran with three chains so that he wouldn't get away*; tharraing e Fionn a dh’ionnsaigh an uisge: *he dragged Fionn towards the water*; gu h-obann, dh’fhosgail an t-uilebheist a bheul: *suddenly, the monster opened its mouth*; dìreach an dèidh cas Fhinn: *just after Fionn's foot*; thàinig e a dh’uachdar a-rithist agus shnàimh e aig astar air feadh an locha: *it came to the surface again and it swam at speed throughout the loch*; tro chliathaich an uilebheist: *through the side of the monster*; rùisgte, gun stiall air: *naked, without a stitch on him*; bha Bran maol, gun ghaoisid: *Bran was bald, without hair*; bha fios aig Fionn dè bha fa-near dha, oir bha air a chorrach a chur fo a dheud-fios: *Fionn knew what he intended, because he had put his finger under his tooth of knowledge*; a’ gabhail cùram mu: *concerned about*; cuiribh bian ceart air a’ chù: *give the dog a proper coat*; dà thaobh dhubh agus tarr geal: *two black sides*; druim uaine chon na seilge: *a green back for hunting*; dà chluais chorrach chrò-dhearg: *two erect crimson ears*; bha e furasta aithneachadh: *he was easy to recognise*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **le bhith a’ cur a chorraig fo a dheud-fios:** *by putting his finger under his tooth of knowledge. The deud-fios is one of the most powerful symbols of Fionn Mac Cumhail, the legendary Gaelic hero. You might not recognise the word deud for ‘tooth’ as it is obsolete in general usage today, but we retain it in the Gaelic for ‘toothache’ – an deudadh.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **Dè tha a’ cur ort?:** *what is upsetting you?*

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA